

COLUMBIA COUNTY

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February 12, 2026

The Honorable Ron Wyden and The Honorable Jeff Merkley
United States Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Senators Merkley and Wyden:


The Columbia County Board of Commissioners strongly supports the Vernonia School District's request for federal funding to construct a covered grandstand with accessible restroom facilities at the Vernonia School campus.

Vernonia is a rural community that has experienced significant flooding, including the catastrophic 2007 flood, as well as more recent neighborhood evacuations due to a gas leak. In frontier areas with limited emergency services and few alternative gathering facilities, school campuses often serve as centralized coordination sites during severe weather, wildfire smoke events, and power outages. Infrastructure that provides covered shelter and accessible sanitation strengthens the community's ability to assemble safely and respond effectively during local emergencies.


The project reflects strong local commitment, with community partners contributing matching funds. In addition to its emergency function, the facility will support year-round school and community events, ensuring that federal investment provides lasting benefit to students, families, and residents in the Vernonia area.

Respectfully,

Respectfully,
BOARD OF COUNTY COMMISSIONERS
FOR COLUMBIA COUNTY, OREGON



Kellie Jo Smith, Chair



Casey Garrett, Commissioner



Margaret Magruder, Commissioner